



Afternoon Alert - Monday, April 17, 2017

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HEADLINES

Noon news

NHK and TV Asahi led with reports that Vice President Pence is currently visiting South Korea amid heightened tension on the Korean Peninsula, saying that the Vice President visited the Demilitarized Zone this morning. TBS gave top play to televised remarks by National Security Adviser McMaster on Sunday, who said that the U.S. will "peacefully" resolve the North Korea issue through cooperation with Japan and South Korea. Fuji TV led with a report that Prime Minister Abe said at the Diet this morning that it is important to apply pressure on North Korea so that it will respond to serious dialogue. The premier also reportedly said the GOJ is prepared to protect and rescue Japanese nationals on the Korean Peninsula in the event of a contingency there. NTV led with a follow-up report on the murder of a nine-year-old Vietnamese girl in Chiba.

INTERNATIONAL

Scholars discuss North Korea

NHK's "Nichiyo Toron" Sunday debate show aired a live discussion by seven scholars, during which they talked about North Korea's nuclear and missile development in response to Pyongyang's failed missile launch on early Sunday morning. Canon Institute for Global Studies Research Director Kunihiro Miyake, Nanzan University Professor Shunji Hiraiwa, and Takushoku University Professor Hideshi Takesada stated that the launch demonstrated Pyongyang's determination not to give in to pressure from the U.S. They speculated that the DPRK is carefully watching to see how the Trump administration will respond. Keio University Professor Toshihiro Nakayama expressed his view that the pressure applied by the Trump administration is working. University of Tokyo Professor Masahiro

Kohara commented that DPRK leader Kim Jong Un is apparently playing a game while observing the responses of Beijing and Washington. Katsuhisa Furukawa, a former member of the UN panel on sanctions on North Korea, expressed concern over the steady progress being made in Pyongyang's development of nuclear and missile technology.

Vice President Pence, PM Abe to discuss North Korea

NHK reported on its website that Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga told a press conference this morning that following North Korea's ballistic missile launch on Sunday, Vice President Pence and Prime Minister Abe will exchange views on North Korea in addition to other topics when they meet on Tuesday. On North Korea's missile launch, Suga reportedly said: "We will work closely with relevant nations, including the U.S. and South Korea, and strongly urge North Korea to exercise restraint. We will also maintain high-level surveillance and take all necessary measures, including collecting the necessary information, to protect the lives and property of the Japanese people in every situation." Suga also said: "It is important for Japan and the United States, as well as South Korea, to work closely and make various diplomatic efforts to deter provocations together with China and Russia as well as at the United Nations." Concerning the prime minister's meeting with Vice President Pence, who will visit Japan on April 18, Suga speculated that they will exchange views on North Korea, saying: "Since the meeting will be held following such a development, they will probably discuss security and other issues."

Senior White House official says U.S. to solve North Korea issue diplomatically

NHK reported this morning that National Security Adviser McMaster said during an interview with ABC on Sunday that North Korea's missile launch on Sunday "fits into a pattern of provocative, destabilizing, and threatening behavior" and stressed the importance of North Korea halting its development of arms and working toward denuclearization. The network said that while McMaster also said "all options are on the table" regarding the Trump administration's response to North Korea, he also expressed the view that the U.S. will make efforts to diplomatically solve the issue without resorting to use of force against the North.

The network also reported on a tweet by President Trump on Sunday, in which he said: "Why would I call China a currency manipulator when they are working with us on the North Korean problem? We will see what happens!" The network said the message was an expression of hope for Chinese action on North Korea.

Former Trump transition team member says U.S. may take unilateral action against DPRK

Fuji TV reported at noon that Ado Machida, a former senior member of the Trump transition team, said the U.S. may take unilateral action against North Korea. He was quoted as saying: "Just like what you saw in a unilateral action against Syria, it is very possible that President Trump will deem it necessary to take direct unilateral action against North Korea." The network reported that Machida

said the Trump administration has always taken the position that "all options are on the table" regarding North Korea, warning that North Korea should be prepared for countermeasures from the U.S. if it continues to undertake outrageous actions.

- [Trade Minister Seko, Commerce Secretary Ross to discuss cooperation in cybersecurity, energy](#) (Nikkei)
- [Keidanren to send economic mission to U.S. next month to facilitate dialogue at state level](#) (Nikkei)
- [Japan looks to revive moribund TPP, sans U.S.](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Abe cranks up tension in North Korea statements](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Editorial: Pyongyang parade unnecessarily raises tensions with United States](#) (The Japan News)
- [Japan, Russia to hold meeting of customs officials this year to expand trade](#) (Nikkei)
- [Trade Minister Seko discuss infrastructure export with Indian counterpart](#) (Nikkei)
- [PM Abe's special advisor Kawai to visit Middle East](#) (Nikkei)
- [Commentary: Japan should be more active peace contributor](#) (The Japan News)

ECONOMY

U.S.-Japan financial ministerial to be held later this week

Nikkei reported online that Finance Minister Aso will hold talks with Treasury Secretary Mnuchin in Washington on April 20 on the margins of the G20 financial ministerial conference, projecting that attention will be focused on what Secretary Mnuchin says in the wake of President Trump's recent remark that the dollar is "too strong," since he is in charge of foreign exchange policy.

Removing nuclear debris largest hurdle to decommissioning

Saturday's "NHK Special" reported on the ongoing efforts to decommission three nuclear reactors at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, focusing on the process of removing approximately 880 tons of nuclear fuel debris from the reactors. Removing the nuclear debris is reportedly the largest hurdle in the decommissioning process. In order to assess the situation inside the nuclear reactors, TEPCO conducted surveys of Reactor No. 2 in January and Reactor No. 1 in March using robots. Based on the surveys, there are believed to be high levels of cesium inside Reactor No. 2, which will

make the removal of debris difficult, and there are thought to be large volumes of nuclear debris at the bottom of the container vessel inside Reactor No. 1. The program said a decision has to be made by this summer on how to remove the debris despite the fact that information on the interior of the reactors is extremely limited due to the high level of radiation. The program also reported on the increasing volume of contaminated water, which is estimated at one million tons. Although the GOJ has estimated that the decommissioning process will be completed in 40 years, it may be delayed due to the limited information available and extreme difficulty of the operation, adding that priority must be placed on ensuring safety.

- [Japan's wage growth weak for second year in a row](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Tussle over Toshiba chip unit heats up as field thins](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Smaller banks break ranks on Toshiba financing](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [JA prefectural unions plan to set rice production guidelines even after acreage reduction policy ends in FY18](#) (Nikkei)

SECURITY

Stray bullet from U.S. military strikes vehicle in Okinawa

Okinawa papers reported extensively over the weekend on an incident in which a car parked at Camp Hansen in Okinawa was struck by a bullet. A bullet hole was discovered in the vehicle, which belongs to a Japanese construction worker and was parked at a dam site on the base, on Thursday evening. The bullet was found nearby. The type of bullet was not specified. According to the papers, a bullet hole was also found in a water tank at the dam site in early April. An object that appeared to be a bullet was discovered inside the tank and later collected by U.S. military personnel. While noting that local officials lodged a protest with the U.S. military and urged it to take preventive measures to ensure the safety of Japanese workers there, the articles expressed rage over the incident since local citizens could be struck by a bullet if the incidents continue.

More military police to be stationed in front of Camp Schwab

Saturday morning's Okinawa Times front-paged a U.S. military decision to deploy additional military police to Camp Schwab apparently in preparation for the GOJ's plan to begin bank protection work for land reclamation in the near future. The paper expressed concern that the military police will take high-handed measures to detain protesters in a preemptive manner, as the U.S. military has been displeased with the failure of the Japanese police to enforce regulations and crack down on anti-base picketers at the installation.

U.S. military conducts training in preparation for possible attack on Okinawa

Sunday's Ryukyu Shimpo gave prominent lead coverage to a training drill carried out by the U.S. military at Kadena AB on Wednesday, noting that it was conducted to simulate a military response to an attack on the island prefecture. While speculating that the drill was carried out with the rising tension in North Korea in mind, the paper voiced apprehension about the possibility of local residents being "victimized" because North Korea might attack U.S. bases in Okinawa. On the U.S. military's release of a photo of military aircraft being assembled in formation on a runway during the training, a local security analyst conjectured that it was intended to raise morale of military personnel.

- [Rise in Osprey mishap rate triggers concern among experts](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)
- [Defense institute report says North Korea poses "increasingly serious" threat](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Japan begins withdrawing SDF from South Sudan](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)
- [USFJ conducting market research on special trailers for transportation of military cargo](#) (Akahata)
- [Editorial: Take all possible steps to prepare for contingency on Korean Peninsula](#) (The Japan News)
- [Editorial: Deeper, broader security cooperation should be sought through ACSA pacts](#) (The Japan News)
- [Commentary: DPRK will likely continue provocation through missile launches](#) (Nikkei)
- [Okinawa creates pamphlet to promote correct understating of base issues throughout Japan](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)
- [Russian military aircraft spotted again flying southward toward Chiba](#) (Sankei)

POLITICS

- [Prime minister's schedule on April 16](#) (Nikkei)
- [Prime minister's schedule on April 15](#) (Nikkei)
- [Prime minister's schedule on April 14](#) (Nikkei)
- [Democratic Party accepts deputy president's resignation, unsure about replacing him](#) (Yomiuri)

- [Editorial: Finance Ministry has run out of excuses in land sale scandal](#) (The Asahi Shimbun)
- [Former prime minister establishes new group promoting elimination of nuclear power](#) (Nikkei)
- [GOJ begins discarding first batch of documents designated as state secrets](#) (Mainichi)
- [Cartoon: : Renho](#) (Asahi)

OPINION POLLS

More than 90% feel threatened by North Korea's nuclear and missile programs

Fuji TV reported at noon on the results of its opinion poll conducted over the weekend, which put support for the Abe cabinet at 59.3%, up 1.9 points from last month. Nonsupport dropped 0.5 points to 30.4%. On North Korea's development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, 91.3% of respondents said they feel threatened. With regard to the Trump administration's attack on Syria over the use of chemical weapons, 36.0% welcomed it and 55.7% did not. Respondents were evenly split over Prime Minister Abe's expression of support for the U.S. resolve to contain the proliferation and use of chemical weapons, with 46.9% expressing support and 46.6% expressing nonsupport. When asked about legislation to penalize preparations to commit terrorist acts, 57.2% expressed support and 32.9% expressed opposition.

- [64% approve of U.S. pressure on North Korea, cabinet support up to 60%, Yomiuri poll](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Opinion poll & results from Yomiuri Shimbun](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Cabinet support rate declines further to 50.0%, half of pollees welcome Japan-U.S. economic dialogue, Jiji Press poll](#) (Jiji)

EDUCATION

- [Kyoto Univ. to offer MBA program in hospitality](#) (Nikkei)

SOCIETY

Rebuilding Kumamoto Castle

Sunday's "NHK Special" reported on Kumamoto Castle, which was severely damaged by the series of powerful earthquakes in Kumamoto Prefecture a year ago. The program said rebuilding the castle has become a symbol of reconstruction for local citizens. The program showed a digital image of the

castle created from photos of the ruins taken by a drone equipped with a 4K camera. Although the castle's stone walls that were added during the Meiji era suffered severe damage, the original stone walls built by samurai more than 400 years ago suffered almost no damage. The program looked into how the stone walls were originally built and also reported on ongoing efforts to preserve cultural assets while enhancing their quake resistance.

- [Japan criticized for lax enforcement of Hague Treaty on parental abduction](#) (Sankei)
- [Japan population falls for 6th year, rise in foreign residents](#) (Kyodo News)
- [North Korean threat spurs access to Japan gov't's safety portal](#) (Sankei)

